

ABSTRACT

Method and apparatus for formatting information within a directory tree structure into an encyclopedia-like entry. The method includes performing a search by utilizing a selective one or more search methodologies including keyword search, hierarchical search, dichotomous key search, and parametric search to correlate a search criteria to a searchable database for generating one or more matching items, wherein the searchable database is formatted in the directory tree structure. The directory tree structure includes nodes comprising a collection of related data and branches comprising links between the nodes. Each matching item represents a node from within the directory tree structure. The method further includes selecting one of the matching items, formatting the collection of related data corresponding to the node of the selected matching item into an encyclopedia-like entry, and displaying the encyclopedia-like entry corresponding to the node of the selected matching item. The encyclopedia-like entry can include text, graphics, links to related topics within the directory tree structure, links to related web sites external to the directory tree structure, or any combination thereof. Utilizing the search methodologies can be performed by a server, preferably accessible over the internet through the public switched telephone network.